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HEADQUARTERS, U. S. ARMY SECTION
MILITARY ASSISTANCE ADVISORY GROUP, VIETNAM
Saigon, Vietnam

MAGAR-OT (OP)

27 April 1962

SUBJECT: Lessons Learned Number 9.

TO: See Distribution

1. GENERAL: On 4-5 April 1962 an operation was conducted in KIEN HOA Sector, 32nd DTA, III CTZ, by the Sector Commanders of Vinh Bin and Kien Hoa Provinces.

2. PARTICIPATING UNITS: The units which participated in the operation were one Civil Guard battalion, two Civil Guard companies, one Ranger company, a company size mobile SDC unit, and a platoon of 105mm howitzers supported by sampans, 2 LCVP's and a large motor barge.

3. MISSION: The mission of the operation was to clear Long Hoa Island and the southwestern tip of Kien Hoa Province of VC and to destroy VC training areas, prison compounds and hospitals suspected of being in the area .

4. CONCEPT: The concept of the operations was for one force, consisting of the CG Bn, Ranger Co and SDC unit, to cross the river in sampans and attack down Long Hoa Island in a southeasterly direction while the two CG companies crossed the river in 2 LCVP's and a motor barge and attacked generally north across the southern portion of the Island. The attack on the southwestern tip of Kien Hoa Province was to be made on the second day and was to involve only the CG units. The Artillery platoon was to support the entire operation from a position south of the Co Chien river.

5. RESULTS: The operation can be considered to be partially successful in that a POW camp and a training center were destroyed. 17 VC were killed and one VC, one suspect, and 7 rifles were captured. However, the areas were not cleared of VC. The attack in the SW portion of Kien Hoa province was no more than a patrol action since, because of low tide, only two platoons were able to cross the river to make the attack. Although this unit fired on 40 fleeing men, contact was not maintained because of possible ambush, and lack of a reserve and artillery support.

6. LESSONS LEARNED:

a. AMPHIBIOUS OPERATIONS MUST BE CLOSELY COORDINATED WITH LOCAL TIDE CONDITIONS. In this operation the attack on the island was delayed and the attack on the SW tip of Kien Hoa Province was practically aborted because embarkations and debarkations were not timed to coincide with high tide. Naval personnel should participate in the planning of operations in areas adjacent to the sea.

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b. MAXIMUM FEASIBLE FIRE SUPPORT MEANS SHOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT OPERATIONS: Fire support for this operation was provided by one platoon of 105mm howitzers. It appears that more artillery support could have been effectively employed, possibly a battery each of 105mm and 155mm howitzers. The addition of a platoon of 155mm howitzers would have placed all objective areas within artillery support range without moving the gun positions.

c. MAXIMUM USE SHOULD BE MADE OF L-19 TYPE AIRCRAFT. No observation type aircraft were employed in this operation even though the terrain analysis indicated that ground observation would be frequently limited. Proper use of these aircraft can be of inestimable value to the ground commander in observing friendly and enemy movements, adjusting artillery fire, assisting in the relaying of messages, and directing air strikes. The capabilities of this type aircraft should be fully exploited.

d. MISSIONS OF SUBORDINATE UNITS MUST CONTRIBUTE TO THE OVERALL FORCE MISSION: The terrain objectives assigned to the subordinate units in this operation did not insure accomplishment of the overall mission even though each unit secured its assigned objective. In one case a unit contacted an estimated platoon of VC but permitted the VC to flee without pursuit because the unit had "reached its objective". In another instance, artillery fire was adjusted on a force of approximately 25 VC, yet not even a recon patrol was dispatched from the objective area to check the effect of the fire. In counter-insurgency operations the capture of ground objectives does not contribute to the attainment of the mission. The VC should be the primary objective of counter-insurgency operations rather than a piece of real estate. Specific objectives should only be assigned which, in addition to effecting coordination, will insure contact with the enemy and his installations. Once this contact is made, the mission becomes one of destruction.

7. The foregoing is for your information and guidance.

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